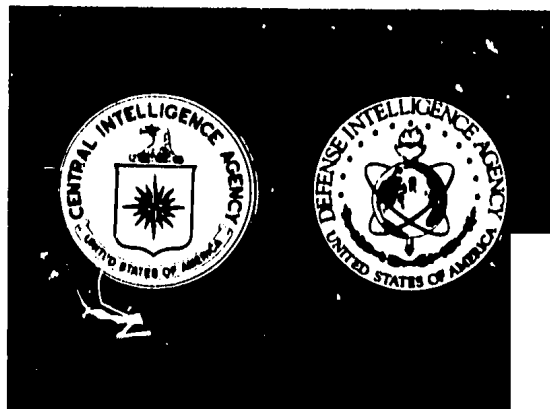


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## Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

DIA review(s) completed.

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13 March 1975

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**SURVEY OF COMMUNIST  
MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA\***

**(This report covers the period  
February 27 - March 12, 1975)**

**The Key Points**

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- Communist forces launched widespread, heavy attacks in South Vietnam during the past week overrunning six district capitals and apparently capturing the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot.

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- During 1974, government control of South Vietnam's population declined by 10 percentage points according to the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) – the largest annual decline since the inception of HES in 1970.
- The gap between ARVN and Communist ammunition expenditures widened during February.
- Rice and petroleum stocks in Phnom Penh have declined somewhat during the past two weeks, while ammunitions stocks have remained about the same.
- The summary of a recent CIA/DIA paper, *The South Vietnamese Air Force*, is at Annex B.

\* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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**Preface**

This report summarizes evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military supplies toward and into South Vietnam, (II) significant combat activity, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

**DETAILS****I. Infiltration and Redeployment of North Vietnamese  
Personnel and Military Supplies**

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**Comparative Starts of Troops from North Vietnam**

	1972/73	1973/74
<b>Total regular infiltration cycle, Sep 1-Jun 30</b>	<b>94,000</b>	<b>94,500</b>
	1973/74	1974/75
<b>Total regular infiltration starts, Sep 1-Mar 12</b>	<b>61,000</b>	<b>84,000</b>
MR Tri-Thien	2,000	7,500
MR 5	5,000	7,000
B-3 Front	7,000	15,500
COSVN	24,000	37,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	23,000	17,000

1. This comparison does not include troops destined for Southern Laos/MR 559.

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3. In anticipation of heavy losses in the months ahead, Hanoi has taken important new steps to assure that it can sustain a high level of infiltration. Since mid-January, both the North Vietnamese press [ ] have provided good evidence of a widespread military recruiting campaign that is larger and more intense than any since 1972. Between January 20 and 31, four editorials on military recruitment appeared in national-level party and army daily newspapers – an unusual emphasis on recruiting, even for the pre-cease-fire period. Their issuance in an 11-day period suggests a high priority. The editorials also indicated that the regime was having some difficulty in getting young men to volunteer for military service. The army daily pointedly reminded the populace that all young men have a military obligation to fulfill and encouraged mass organizations to devote greater attention to motivating the youth to enter the army.

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4. [ ] the step-up in recruitment was the direct result of a recent decision by Hanoi to increase its forces in South Vietnam. [ ] the North Vietnamese are drafting all categories of personnel, including students, deserters, and ethnic minorities – a practice observed when Hanoi maximizes recruitment. One article suggests that some inductees are less physically fit than those of recent months. The last time we noted a reduction in physical fitness standards was in 1972. The lowering of physical standards will probably permit Hanoi to induct enough manpower to meet its quotas, but it will have a detrimental effect on the combat effectiveness of Communist units. [ ] some recently infiltrated troops were poorly disciplined and hesitated to obey orders.

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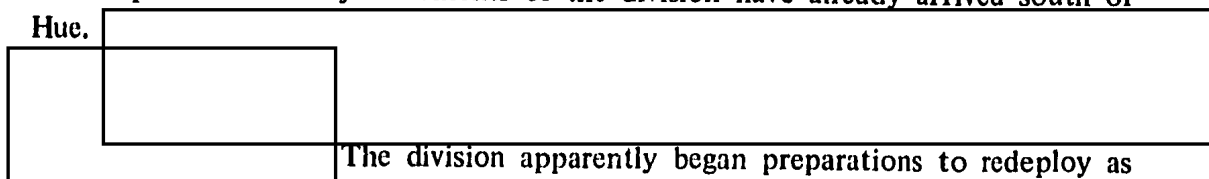
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11. In South Vietnam, the NVA 325th Infantry Division is redeploying from eastern Quang Tri to Thua Thien Province in northern MR 1. Several recent POWs have reported that major elements of the division have already arrived south of Hue.

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The division apparently began preparations to redeploy as early as mid-January, when local Communist forces in Quang Tri Province began replacing the division's units on front line positions. The positions, however, may eventually be occupied by the 341st Division.

12. The redeployment of the 325th Division to southeastern Thua Thien Province places two infantry divisions in this area for the first time since the cease-fire. The move will significantly increase Communist combat capabilities south of Hue, and in particular, the threat to the strategic Hai Van Pass overlooking Route 1. At a minimum, the move could be designed to enable the Communists to recapture high terrain -- including Mo Tau and Bong Mountains -- which dominate Phu Bai Airfield.

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## Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

## South Vietnam

## Regular Combat Forces

		MR 1	
VC/NVA <sup>1</sup>	RVNAF <sup>2</sup>	VC/NVA	RVNAF
183,000	355,000	83,000	96,000
		341st <sup>3</sup>	VNMC
		325th	Airborne
		324B	1st
		304th	2d
		2d	3d
		673d AD	Regional
		377th AD	Forces

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions.

3. Includes only one regiment and headquarters' elements.

MR 3	
VC/NVA	RVNAF
35,000	90,000

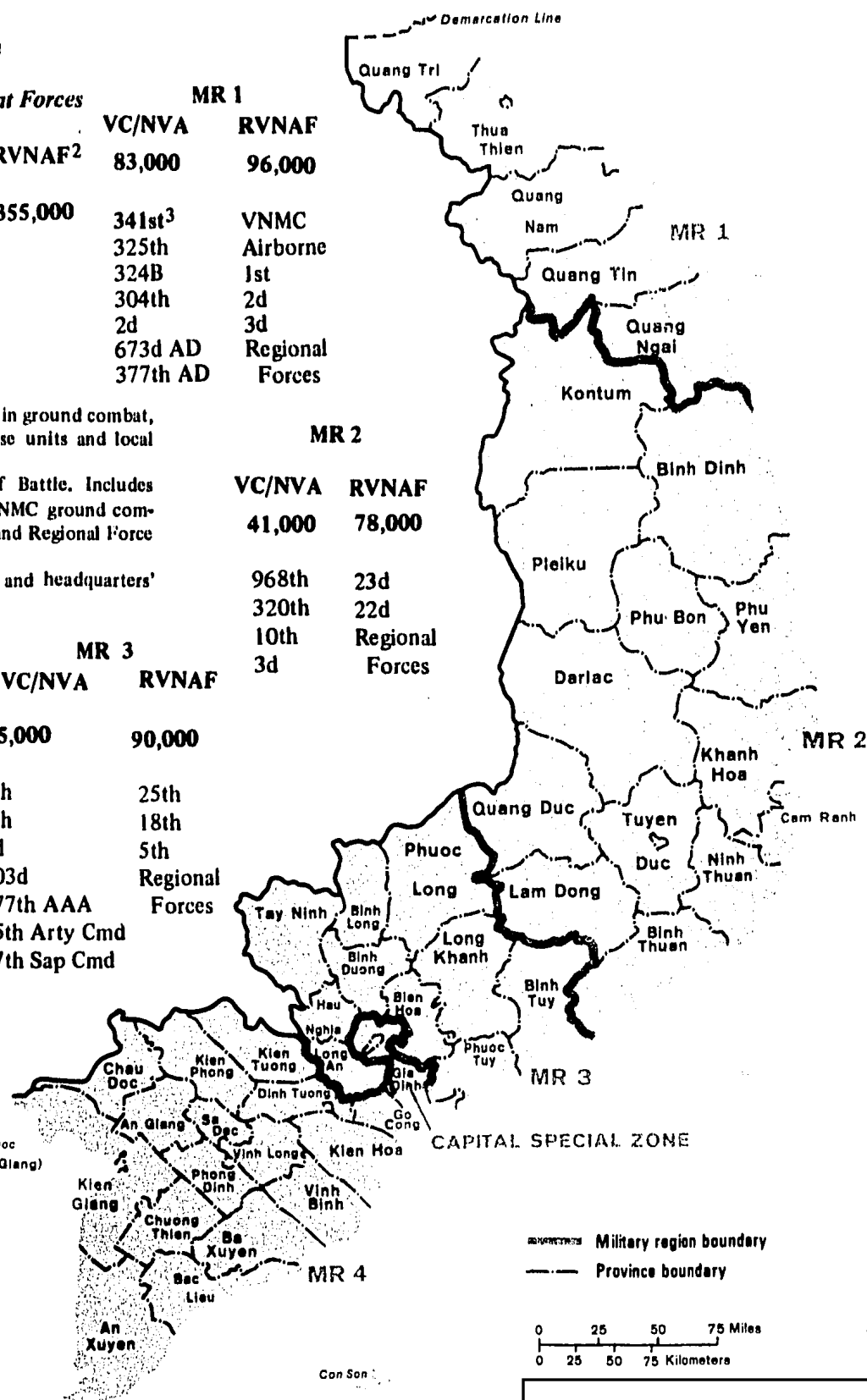
9th  
7th  
3d  
303d  
377th AAA  
75th Arty Cmd  
27th Sap Cmd

25th  
18th  
5th  
Regional Forces

MR 4	
VC/NVA	RVNAF
24,000	91,000

8th  
5th

21st  
9th  
7th  
Regional Forces



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## II. Communist Combat Activity in Indochina

### *South Vietnam*

21. Communist forces launched widespread, heavy attacks in South Vietnam during the past week. These included overrunning six district capitals and apparently capturing Ban Me Thuot, the capital of Darlac Province, in some of the fiercest fighting since the cease-fire. The attacking Communist force in Darlac is believed to consist largely of the NVA 320th Infantry Division, which recently moved south from Pleiku.

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22. The heightened activity initially was concentrated in MR 2. On March 4, Communist forces overran several outposts and destroyed numerous bridges along Route 19, gaining control of large segments of this major corridor linking Pleiku City and the central highlands with coastal Binh Dinh Province. These attacks were accompanied by shellings of Kontum City and Pleiku and Phu Cat Airfields. They were followed on March 8 and 9 by tank-led attacks and heavy artillery shellings against Ban Me Thuot and other government positions in the southern part of the central highlands. As a result of these attacks, the Communists captured three district capitals -- Thuan Man in Phu Bon Province, Buon Ho in Darlac Province, and Duc Lap in Quang Duc Province -- and are threatening to add the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot.

23. By early this week, combat activity had also spread throughout the rest of South Vietnam. In MR 1, Communist forces launched attacks against marine positions northwest of Hue, attempting to cut Route 1 and against ARVN units on the high ground overlooking the city and Phu Bai to the south. Fifteen hamlets were occupied by VC forces in Quang Tri Province. Airborne forces west of Dai Loc and north of Duc Duc in Quang Nam Province were subjected to heavy attacks-by-fire, and two lightly defended district capitals in Quang Tin Province -- Tien Phuoc and Hau Duc -- were lost in sharp ground attacks.

24. On March 11 and 12, activity increased in MRs 3 and 4. Activity in MR 3 was centered near Route 22 south of Tay Ninh City. The road was interdicted in several places, isolating Tay Ninh, and activity continues as government forces attempt to reopen the road. Moreover, the district town of Tri Tam in Binh Duong Province was captured by Communist forces. Attacks-by-fire were also recorded in the vicinity of Chon Thanh in Binh Long Province and Xuan Loc in Long Khanh Province. MR 4 is experiencing its monthly high point of combat, with widely scattered attacks-by-fire and ground probes. During this period of intensive combat, several airfields throughout South Vietnam, including Da Nang, Pleiku, and Bien Hoa, were shelled, resulting in 27 aircraft being damaged or destroyed.

### *Cambodia*

25. Because of the large number of incoming 105-mm howitzer and 107-mm rocket rounds, the DC-8 airlift was halted on March 11 for one day. The 105-mm fire probably is coming from Tuol Leap, a key town captured by the insurgents at the end of February. FANK has launched an operation to retake the town, but it has become bogged down both as a result of strong KC resistance and poor FANK leadership. Although it will be necessary for the government to retake Tuol Leap in order to ease the 105-mm threat to Pochentong, the prospects of doing so appear dim.

26. Northwest of Phnom Penh, a new commander has provided aggressive leadership to the FANK 7th Division. The situation in the 7th Division's area of operation remains serious, however, and FANK will continue to be hard pressed to maintain its outer defense line. In the vicinity of the Prek Phnou petroleum facility, KC forces have been contained.

27. Along the Mekong River corridor, the government position at Peam Rang Leu in the southern narrows was abandoned on March 7. The loss of this position completes Communist control of the river between Neak Luong and the South Vietnamese border, further reducing the already remote prospects of a resupply convoy reaching Phnom Penh this dry season.

### III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

#### *Status of Stocks in Phnom Penh*

28. Daily stock levels in Phnom Penh fluctuated depending on consumption rate and air deliveries. Ammunition stocks have remained relatively stable over the past two weeks, but rice and petroleum stocks are declining gradually. The following tables show Cambodian government stocks of critical supplies in Phnom Penh and comparative deliveries via the Mekong and airlift to the capital in 1974 and 1975.

Critical Stocks in Phnom Penh  
March 12, 1975<sup>1</sup>

	Stocks (Metric Tons)	Days of Supply	Daily Consumption Rate (Metric Tons)
Rice	8,100	15	545
Petroleum	6,400	18	358
Ammunition	10,100	27	368 <sup>2</sup>

1. Data are approximate.

2. Based on February 1975 ammunition issue rate; actual consumption varies considerably from this rate during any given week.

## Deliveries to Phnom Penh

	Metric Tons		
	Jan 1- Mar 12, 1974 <sup>1</sup>	Jan 1- Mar 12, 1975	
	Mekong	Mekong	Airlift
<b>Total</b>	<b>124,300</b>	<b>18,050</b>	<b>27,300</b>
Rice	55,700	6,750	6,800
Petroleum	32,200	5,300	4,200
Ammunition	36,400	6,000	16,300

1. Data concerning air deliveries for this time period last year are not readily available, but it is estimated that deliveries by air accounted for no more than 10% of total imports for all of 1974.

***ARVN and NVA Ammunition Expenditures***

29. The gap between ARVN and Communist ammunition expenditures continued to widen during February. For the second straight month, ARVN artillery firings dropped only slightly despite a much sharper fall in Communist expenditures of artillery, rocket, recoilless rifle, and mortar ammunition. ARVN fired a daily average of 11,180 artillery rounds during the month, down 15% from January's rate, while the Communists reportedly expended only 300 rounds per day of their heavy weapons, 50% below the previous month's level and the lowest Communist expenditure rate reported since March 1974.

30. Despite ARVN's efforts to conserve ammunition, these measures appear to have lost some momentum in recent months, as ARVN has attempted to thwart Communist initiatives and regain lost territory (see the following table). Although it is true that many ARVN units reportedly are still forced to hold back expenditures by restrictions on ammunition usage, this conservation has been offset by the large expenditures being used to support ARVN's many counteroffensive operations. This has been particularly true in MR 1, where 46% of ARVN's artillery firings occurred during February.

***1974 HES Results***

31. During 1974, government control of South Vietnam's population declined by about ten percentage points, according to the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES).<sup>4</sup> This was the largest annual decline since the inception of the present HES in 1970 and reduced the proportion of the population under government control (that part rated "A" and "B") to 72% - slightly less than in January 1973 (see the chart).

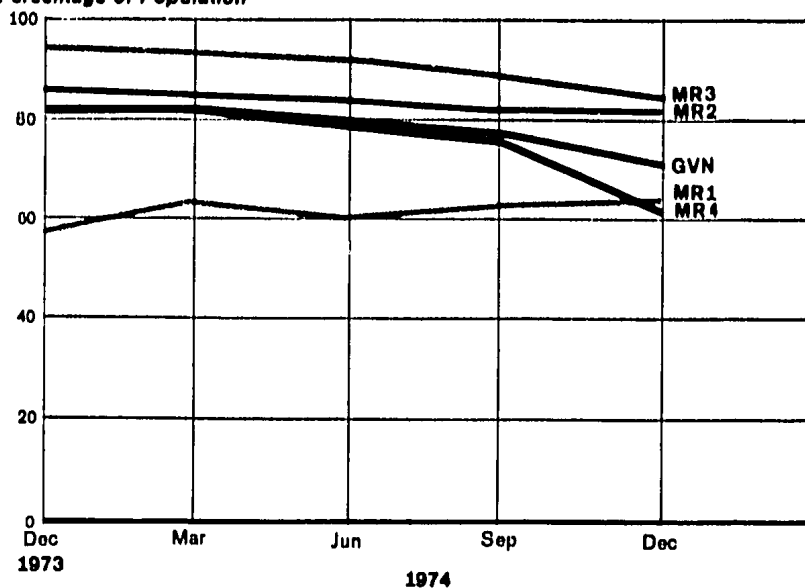
4. HES is subject to a number of weaknesses, the most important of which are differences in the quality of reporting from various provinces in South Vietnam. Nonetheless, HES results have been a reasonably good indicator of general population control trends over time.

## Government Control in South Vietnam

### HES AB Results

(End of Quarter)

Percentage of Population



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### ARVN and NVA Ammunition Expenditures in South Vietnam September 1974 - February 1975

	Rounds per Day					
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
<b>ARVN artillery</b>						
Total	10,250	6,780	7,860	13,910	13,120	11,180
MR 1	4,290	3,370	3,330	3,700	3,040	5,190
MR 2	2,190	970	1,420	1,960	2,470	1,090
MR 3	2,200	990	1,430	3,880	3,470	1,820
MR 4	1,570	1,450	1,680	4,370	4,140	3,080
<b>NVA artillery, rocket, recoilless rifles, and mortar</b>						
Total	1,150	900	600	820	600	300
MR 1	870	660	430	170	100	100
MR 2	70	90	60	30	80	30
MR 3	130	80	40	480	260	80
MR 4	80	70	70	140	160	90



Only MR 1 showed a gain during the year, while in MR 2 the decline was slight. In the lower half of the country, however, there was a serious deterioration as more than two million people were reclassified as contested or came under Communist domination.

32. On a net basis, about 100,000 additional persons in the northern half of South Vietnam came under government control during 1974. This relatively good showing -- MR 1 rose by seven percentage points and MR 2 was down by only four percentage points -- is attributable primarily to generally fixed battle lines, a shortage of arable land under Communist control, and several government pacification efforts, particularly in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai Provinces. In addition, several large-scale refugee resettlements augmented the government-controlled population, while denying the Communists an easy source of recruitment. As a result of the Communists' dry season campaign to seize populated areas, however, a deterioration in the government's position is expected.

33. By contrast, the situation in heavily populated MRs 3 and 4 was marked by a sharp decline in government control, according to HES results. Although government control in MR 3 at the end of 1974 still was higher than in any other region (84%), more than 650,000 people were added to the contested or Communist-controlled categories. The deterioration in MR 3 in only one month -- December -- exceeded the net decline for the entire rest of the year, largely as a result of South Vietnamese setbacks in Phuoc Long Province and the capture of the district capital of Tanh Linh in Binh Tuv Province by the Communists.

34. The reported erosion in MR 4 was even worse -- about 1.5 million persons, or about one-fourth of the number controlled by the government at the beginning of the year. As in MR 3, military activity was responsible for much of the decline, as Communist units forced ARVN and territorial units to abandon outposts and interdicted lines of communication. In addition, the Communists in MR 4 targeted population centers as part of their anti-pacification program. Because they gained access to increased numbers of hamlets, they also were able to step up proselytizing activities, recruitment, and tax collection, further eroding the government's position. About 40% of the decline in MR 4 during 1974 occurred in December, when the Communists seized Hung Long district capital in Chuong Thien Province and made sizable gains in Bac Lieu, Kien Giang, Vinh Binh, and Vinh Long Provinces.

36. The reoccupation of the southern airfields by North Vietnamese aircraft is a logical extension of Hanoi's air defenses. It now seems likely that North Vietnam will permanently station aircraft at at least two and possibly three southern airfields -- Bai Thuong, Vinh, and Dong Hoi. This development could have an adverse impact on VNAF operations in northern M̄K 1 and significantly increases the threat of additional North Vietnamese air activity over the area.

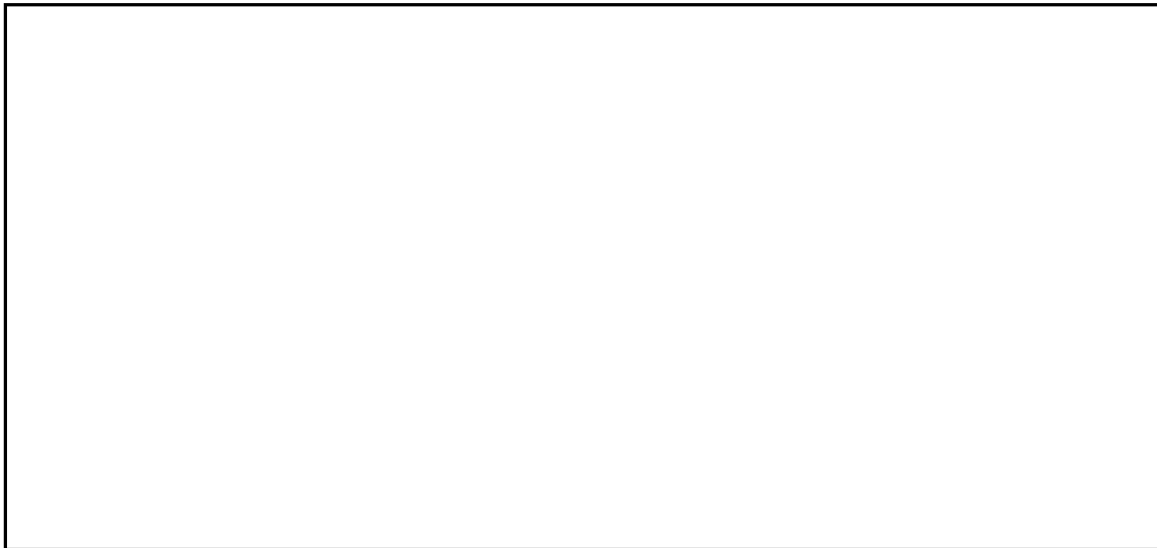
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## ANNEX A

INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL  
TO THE SOUTH

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The number of North Vietnamese combat troops and specialists who have infiltrated since the January 27, 1973, cease-fire accord now totals 260,000. Most of these - 235,000 - have started south since then, while the remaining 25,000 were already in the pipeline as of the date of the settlement. The table shows the number of North Vietnamese troops starting south, by destination, since January 1, 1973.

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**Number of Troops Entering the Pipeline Destined for South Vietnam,  
Southern Laos, and Cambodia Since January 1, 1973<sup>1</sup>**

	COSVN	B-3 Front	MR 5	MR Tri Thien	Southern Laos/ MR 559	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>89,500</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>36,000</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>44,500</b>	<b>229,000</b>
<b>1973</b>						
Jan-Mar	12,000	5,500	4,000	5,000	1,000	27,500
Apr-Jun	1,000	....	....	7,000	1,500	9,500
Jul-Sep	....	....	5,000	2,000	4,500	11,500
Oct-Dec	4,500	2,000	....	....	20,000	26,500
<b>1974</b>						
Jan-Mar	28,500	7,000	6,000	....	....	41,500
Apr-Jun	6,500	1,000	9,000	3,000	....	19,500
Jul-Sep	....	....	5,000	5,500	5,500	16,000
Oct-Dec	8,500	5,000	....	3,000	3,000	19,500
<b>1975</b>						
Jan	12,500	3,000	....	....	3,000	18,500
Feb	11,500	5,500	5,500	....	2,500	25,000
Mar 1-12	4,500	2,000	1,500	2,500	3,500	14,000

1. Excluding special-purpose personnel. The totals are rounded to the nearest 500.

**ANNEX B****THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE**

1. The South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) has grown dramatically since 1970 in both manpower and aircraft. The number of personnel has increased from 36,000 to 62,000, while the inventory of aircraft has grown from 400 to 1,500. Despite the numerical growth, nearly one-half of VNAF personnel have not reached satisfactory proficiency levels, and many aircraft types are experiencing low combat ready rates because of aging and shortages of spare parts. The Vietnamese were trying to alleviate these problems through an aggressive training program, but recent reduction in US assistance levels have undercut these efforts. VNAF will be doing well simply to maintain the *status quo* during fiscal year 1975.

2. An assessment of VNAF's operational capabilities - although also recently degraded by reduced funding - indicates that VNAF has adequately supported South Vietnamese (SVN) combat forces thus far in the post-cease-fire period. It could not, however, meet SVN's tactical and logistic requirements during a Communist general offensive. This judgment is based on a comparison between the level of air support provided by both VNAF and the US Air Force to SVN ground combat units during the initial phase of the 1972 Communist offensive (April-June) and present VNAF capabilities. At current combat ready rates, we estimate that attack aircraft are capable of flying only 60% of the monthly average of close air support and interdiction sorties flown by the US Air Force and the VNAF in April-June 1972. Fixed-wing transports and helicopters are estimated to be capable of transporting 45% and 60%, respectively, of the average monthly tonnage transported to SVN combat units by the US Air Force and the VNAF during April-June 1972.

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